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# BRAZIL'S OPEN DOOR

*Honorato Reza*



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# Brazil's Open Door

by  
Honorato Reza

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## PREFACE

Thirty-two years ago in a village in the state of Guerero in the Republic of Mexico, the Church of the Nazarene carried on a day school. As a small boy the author of this book enrolled in that school. It was in those days that he gave his heart and life to Jesus Christ. The impulse to serve the Lord and the generation of which he was a part led him on from there to the Bible Seminary in Mexico City. After a few years' experience as a pastor in his native country he was encouraged to go to Pasadena College by General Superintendent John W. Goodwin. He earned his way through college by working in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Goodwin. He holds both the A.B. and M.A. degrees from that institution.

When the Spanish Department of the Nazarene Publishing House was established, Rev. Honorato Reza was invited to lead in the undertaking as editor. In that position he has served the church for more than a dozen years. All the Spanish-speaking mission fields of the Church of the Nazarene have been strengthened by his writing and translations. Nothing else that has been done for those countries has given so much impetus to strength and progress. The Department of Foreign Missions has never made a better investment.

Much of the time since its organization the Mexican Church of Kansas City has enjoyed the pastoral ministry of Brother Reza. In 1957 Bethany Nazarene College conferred upon him the honorary degree of doctor of divinity. No one could have been found to receive such honor more worthily or more humbly.

In this brief volume the reader will get a glimpse of the vast country of Brazil through the understanding

mind of one who has a burden for all the unevangelized world, especially Latin America. May that burden be shared by the entire church as we begin our work in this country of such great need and potential for progress.

—G. B. WILLIAMSON

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The Louisiana State University Press, for quotes from *Brazil—People and Institutions*, by T. Lynn Smith.

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The writer greatly appreciates the help received from Dr. G. B. Williamson, general superintendent; Dr. Remiss Rehfeldt, foreign missions secretary; and Miss Helen Temple, office editor of the *Other Sheep*. Without their help he would undoubtedly have failed.





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## CHAPTER I

### APPREHENSION

Early in September of 1957, I was informed that approval had been given me to accompany Dr. G. B. Williamson on his trip of supervision to our Nazarene work in South America. We were to visit Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and Panama, in this order. I was to act as his Spanish interpreter. My going was also for the purpose of promoting the work of our Spanish Department, and to make personal contacts with some of the ninety-one bookstores and dealers with whom we do business in Latin America.

Prior to all this, we were to stop in Brazil on an assignment to explore the possibilities of opening new work there for the Church of the Nazarene. The trip would take about six weeks. The approximate departure date was set for October 24.

To say that the news created in me a terrific sense of restlessness would be an understatement. I was apprehensive, almost fearful. To begin with, I know I am not a traveler. I have to press my way through in order to acquire new friendships. I get nervous in front of people, and I get goose-pimples when I arrive at new places.

And to make matters worse, this time I was to travel with one of the five general superintendents of the church. Throughout the years, Dr. Williamson has been a true friend of our family. We have gone together to Mexico several times, for I have been his interpreter at the Mexican assemblies. He is greatly respected in our home.

I did not mind going with him to Mexico for a few days. Besides, having been born in that country I could assuredly guide him, I thought, and help him understand my people. Many of my friends live there and work for our church.

But this was to be different. We would be together for over six weeks. If he did not already know me thoroughly, this would give him plenty of opportunity to know me well—perhaps even better than I know myself. It seems that the powers of discernment and understanding of our general superintendents are greatly enlarged when dealing with me. I am sure this arises from my extremely high respect for their judgment and leadership.

Going to Brazil! They speak Portuguese there and I know very little about this language. I used to say that Portuguese was a sort of degeneration of Spanish, but I could not defend myself any more with that argument, for the Brazilian people say that Spanish is Portuguese badly spoken. On the other hand, this was not the occasion to be dealing with the semantics and accuracies of either language. This time I would be forced to stay dumb when sitting among them, or do my best to learn at least a few words of Portuguese before the trip. What could I do? I decided to do the latter.

I went to the library and got a Portuguese grammar book. It seemed to me that to get by I could learn a limited vocabulary, the rules of conjugation, and some much-needed phrases. Later I learned that it was not so easy. There are certain letters and combinations of letters that require a certain twist of the tongue to pronounce them. (In Sao Paulo one time I wanted to ask for an address where I was to find a certain person. I told the man that I had the *endereco* of this gentleman if he would tell me the general direction I should go. I pronounced the word *en-de-re-có* with an accent on the

last syllable when I should have said *en-de-ré-zo*, with the accent on the next to the last syllable and a soft s sound for the last syllable. He could not understand me. His hidden smile told me that he wondered why a man as old as I am could not pronounce a simple word which he had known since he was two years old. I felt so embarrassed!)

The library book was good but it did not give me what I wanted. Besides, I had no time to devote to the study of Portuguese. I had to arrange my work at the Spanish office so that there would be a minimum of problems during my absence. I had to write all of my editorials for the Spanish *Herald* through February 15. Plans had to be made for the church I pastor so that it could prepare for a good Thanksgiving offering. I also wanted to be sure that all of the departments of my church would continue as usual and to suggest that something be done in the way of N.F.M.S. activities and the Bible Sunday program. Also, tentative plans were to be made for Christmas, since we would not be returning until the second week in December.

At home I had to make arrangements for the scheduled payments on the house, etc., for in this great United States most all of us have fallen prey to the economic system of time payments and the like. The car had to be fixed for the winter. In short, I had to anticipate all of the needs at the office, church, and home during six or seven weeks and try to satisfy them adequately in advance. No time to study Portuguese!

A little later on I found out that I was to help the office arrange plane schedules and legal papers to enter the countries we were to visit. A headache for anybody! But the ever-obliging American Express Company and the helpful advice of the Foreign Missions office made it all much easier. By Monday, October 21, all papers were in our hands including letters of guarantee of support by the office of Dr. John Stockton, general

treasurer, and seven certificates of police stating that there was "no warrant or criminal process outstanding in this city against Honorato Reza."

Two or three nights before the scheduled trip I did not sleep well. At home my family kept telling me that I was too anxious to leave. My boy said, "I wish I could be you," and my seventeen-year-old girl teased me saying that all I wanted was a rest from being with the family. Actually I had butterflies in my stomach. Why am I going? What am I supposed to do? Of course, I knew that most of my work would be in countries where we have Nazarene work organized. But if I could not understand Portuguese, what good could I be to Dr. Williamson in Brazil?

The day of departure came on Thursday, October 24. Mrs. Williamson and her father, Mr. W. C. Johnston, were at the Kansas City airport to bid us farewell.

Once the plane had taken off, I prayed silently for three things. First, that God would make this a profitable trip for our church and for the unsaved with whom we were to come in contact. Second, that we would be so unctionized by God's Spirit that we would know His will on this trip to Brazil. I felt that Dr. Williamson had a tremendous responsibility—that of exploring the land in order to make recommendations whether or not we should open work in Brazil. I wanted to help as much as possible, for I too am interested in the salvation of souls and the advance of our beloved Zion. Third, I prayed that, even as we were in Brazil, someone somewhere might be hearing God's command to render service for our church in this new field should it be opened. "All things work together" seemed to be the Biblical expression which stayed with me for days and weeks. And the emphasis was on working together. This is God's work; we are His people; our plans are part of a general blueprint by our General Board, decided upon after much

consideration and prayer. Being under His guidance, all would go well.

I guess I also prayed for traveling mercies, but this was not so important if God was in it. I don't especially like to travel by air, but if I have to do it, it is more important to know that I am in the center of God's will than to know that I am well protected during the trip.

Twice during our trip from New York to Sao Paulo, we were informed that the crew was having difficulty with the plane. Later I found out that ordinarily the passengers are not informed concerning any trouble which the plane might be undergoing. The captain of the ship was a man who knew his business, having flown for fifteen years. He no doubt knew that it would be much better to explain some of the difficulty rather than to let the passengers get exaggerated ideas concerning the danger.

Just before landing in Caracas, Venezuela, about ten o'clock at night on October 25, we were told that the light indicating that the nose landing gear was in place did not come on and that the crew was not sure that it was locked in position. In a few minutes they told us that, even though the light could not be fixed, they would try for a landing. The captain felt that everything would be all right. For a minute or two everything was silent inside the plane and all were happy when the landing jolt revealed that we had made it safely to the ground.

Then, as we were getting ready to take off from Caracas for Rio de Janeiro, we were informed that one of the engines was acting up and that it would be necessary to get back to the airport so that the motor could be checked. Said the captain: "This is a long, nine-hour, nonstop flight; we cannot take any chances." We were happy that a man of this type was in charge of our ship. After some delay we took off and made the flight successfully. It is 2,880 miles by air from Caracas, Venezuela,

to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and it is said that this is the longest nonstop, overland route of any commercial airline in the world.

Why get nervous over little things like these? When one is committed fully to God, all will be well. I felt that this was not the sign of courage but rather the assurance of commitment.



## CHAPTER II

### ARRIVAL

The United States of Brazil was discovered in 1500 by Admiral Pedro Alvares Cabral. The name *Vera Cruz*, which means "True Cross," was given to the land at first. Later it was changed to Brasil, from *pau-brasil*, the name of red dyewood which is so abundant in the country. The Portuguese settlers who gathered it were called *brasileiros*.

The Portuguese were the first in transplanting families to the new continent. In certain parts there live colonies of Negro slaves imported from Africa to labor in huge plantations. There is also a large population of Indians. Those inhabiting the south stem mainly from the Incas, although there is some trace of Aztec background.

Brazil is the only country in South America which has been a monarchy and the only country in the new world from which a European country has been ruled. In 1807 the royal family of Portugal fled to Brazil. In 1815 the country was declared a "kingdom" and remained so until 1821 when the court returned to Europe.

The local government of Brazil began in 1530. It is now divided into twenty states, one Federal District, and one territory.

It is true that the country is Portuguese in language, but it is also Portuguese in general character and historical origin. However, there is much intermixture of race since the white settlers mingled in past generations both with the aboriginal inhabitants and with Negroes imported as slaves. In the ports of the coastal strip there is today a considerable Negro or semi-Negro population.

Nevertheless, the influence of the white race prevails and the Latin strain is dominant. In recent times there has been a large immigration from southern Europe, particularly from Italy and the Iberian Peninsula. The large Japanese population is constantly on the increase, especially since the second world war. The Brazilian people as a whole are of a high type, well dressed, and culturally minded.

Speaking of culture, Brazil can show every grade of culture: savage conditions in some of the remote forests as well as luxurious and costly existence in the capital and other great cities. In the bookstores one can see that a native Brazilian literature has been developed in the form of poems and novels dealing with pastoral and peasant life.

Most of the people live near the coast where the majority of the large cities are located. The southeastern section is the most populated.

T. Lynn Smith in his book *Brazil* says that this country "presents one of the most extraordinary cultural diversities to be found anywhere in the world." Then, after explaining differences between the inhabitant of the great cosmopolitan city of Rio de Janeiro and a person from Mato Grosso or any other state in the north, he goes on to add: "What a variety of impressions about landscapes passes through the thoughts of the educated Brazilian when he attempts to visualize Amazonas, Sao Paulo, Ceará, Pernambuco . . . and the other states!"

Yet many sections in the central and northern parts of the country lack adequate means of communication except by plane. There are only 1,500 miles of paved highways and 2,300 miles of railroad tracks in the country. Unexplored jungles occupy large territories of abundant natural resources. It is said that Brazil can easily feed 500 million people with its own natural resources if developed.

"The railroads," says A. Curtis Wilgus, "are chiefly short lines connecting several ports with towns in the interior. But in the Southern states the railroads have been linked up into a connected system, so that the capital has direct railroad communication with the ports and cities lying farther south; and mail trains run from Rio to the capitals of Uruguay and Argentina."

Morning dawned too slowly for me on Saturday, October 26. I wanted to see the land of Brazil from the plane. I was anxious to see some of the 3,286,170 square miles which occupy more than half of the South American continent with a population of fifty-seven million. In extent Brazil is as large as the United States plus another Texas.

Somewhere I have read that within Brazilian limits one can find the greatest water system on the face of the earth and also the greatest virgin forest. Kipling called it "a world in itself."

When a young man in school I learned that most of the country lies within the tropics, yet the great plateau south of the Amazon valley provides, as it were, a subcontinent of temperate uplands in tropical latitudes. The main stream of the Amazon resembles more a moving inland sea than a river and it flows eastward near the equatorial line.

Actually, however, I could see very little from the plane until we approached Rio de Janeiro. Due to atmospheric conditions which made it impossible to land on schedule, we circled the airport three or four times before landing.

Rio de Janeiro has been called the most beautiful city in the world. It was discovered by Andre Goncalves, on New Year's Day, 1502, and was christened "River of January" because Goncalves believed Guanabara Bay to be the mouth of a large river. With a population of over three million people, its sky line stands as a massive

guardian of the land before the many ships anchored in the harbor.

At the airport I soon learned that if a person wants to drink a cup of coffee he must buy his ticket first at a cashier's desk nearby and then present it at the counter for service. Coffee is not served at these places in large cups. In fact it need not be, for a small cup is enough to stimulate one adequately. Brazilian coffee has great powers to pep you up and keep you awake.

In all of Latin America friendships are made around the coffee counter. This is a part of Spanish tradition. I tremendously enjoyed it. Many times, however, I would order coffee with milk instead. For the sake of accuracy I should say that it was milk with coffee, for I invariably asked that very little coffee be poured into my cup full of hot milk. And I ordinarily like good, strong, American coffee. A cup of coffee costs around six *cruzeiros* or about seven cents in American currency.

One dollar was worth 80 *cruzeiros*. Coins are very seldom used. In fact, I received only four coins during the five days we remained in Brazil. My heart ached when I had to pay a taxi fare of between 150 and 200 *cruzeiros* for a trip from the airport to our hotel—a distance of about ten miles—even though it was only a matter of over two dollars.

Sao Paulo is only 221 miles southwest of Rio and it took us one hour to make the trip by air. It was raining when we arrived. The expression "When it rains it pours" would have a very real meaning in Sao Paulo, for it poured and that persistently. With our raincoats and umbrellas provided by the airport officials, we thought we would be all right. But after we walked more than a city block from the plane to the immigration offices in one-half inch of cold, running water, I had the feeling that my shoes were keeping a generous amount of water inside as a very special memento of the occasion. Four

out of the five times we had to be at the airport for travel in and out of Sao Paulo, it was raining.

Although the Brazilian government allows facilities for travel especially for citizens of the United States, one can readily see that they love paper work and red tape. The tourist requires no visa if his stay in the country is to be less than one week. But his passport is stamped several times, he is given a large card to show his status wherever he goes, and he must have police approval to leave the country. He must show his passport at every hotel he registers in and every time he buys a ticket for travel by plane or train within Brazil.

Sao Paulo is avowedly the world's fastest growing city. It already is bigger than Rio de Janeiro, having a population of approximately four million. Fifty years ago it was only a provincial city of two hundred thousand inhabitants. Nowadays it is the largest city in Brazil and the second largest in South America. The concentration of industry in and around the city is the chief reason for its spectacular growth. It is considered the greatest industrial center in all of South America.

New buildings are being erected everywhere. From the top of the hotel where we stayed I counted more than a dozen buildings in process of construction, each with twelve stories or more.

During the afternoon and evening until late at night, people are seen going to and fro like swarms of bees. To me, *Avenida Ipiranga* and the *Avenida Sao Joao* resembled some of the wide avenues in New York during the peak rush hours.

Wide boulevards and underpasses can be seen everywhere as well as narrow streets through which old, open streetcars travel slowly and noisily, carrying people crowded into every available space. Passengers cling to handrails alongside the streetcars until the vehicle looks like a big banana stalk hanging sideways from a thin wire along the street.

But there is another side to the picture. The first night in Sao Paulo I went to the main post office, located about one mile from our hotel. It was ten o'clock, and a steady drizzle made it undesirable to go out. But I wanted to see the people, so I walked through narrow streets until I got to a main avenue that would take me to the post office. Across from the building about two blocks away, I watched people going in and out of second-class business establishments. Fruit markets, small cafes, a tavern here and there, the noise of traffic, and the voices of people conversing aloud in the street—it all added to my already intense feeling of confusion. A completely drunk colored man began to yell and swing his hands around as if to hit somebody. About three or four strong men came and subdued him by hitting him hard on the head until he was left flat on his face unconscious. Two of his friends lifted him and took him up three flights of stairs to his apartment.

I thought of the effects of sin and lawlessness. There I could see people by the hundreds, no doubt nearly all of them with tremendous spiritual problems they could not solve. Superstition and ignorance would be the cause of many of these similar incidents. Isn't there someone that can bring the gospel of full salvation to these people? Why is it that our church has not come to this country before? I felt that in a measure I was to blame, for I should have prayed harder and contributed more to the cause of foreign missions. I kept on walking like an automaton. For seconds at a time I paid no attention to the people or the noise of traffic. Down in my heart I was praying for Brazil, for Sao Paulo, and for that man I saw being carried upstairs.

Upon arriving at the post office, I saw people gathered under a narrow roof waiting for a bus. In the center of the group a modestly dressed young woman was speaking to the crowd about the Saviour. Four or five other people with Bibles and songbooks were there



supporting the service. About seventy-five people were listening to the gospel of Jesus Christ being preached. Some were only curious; other showed great interest; very few looked indifferent.

In my mind I realized that in God's providence we have been allowed more time so that we can preach the message of salvation. I could see in the future scattered groups of people gathered in humble churches along the coast of Brazil and in the interior. Yes, I thought, they could be Nazarenes; but still more I rejoiced in the fact that they would be given a chance to find complete joy in salvation through our preaching.

This showed me a contrast in Brazil just as I had already noticed several points of contrast in other areas. As I found my way back to the hotel that night, I prayed that God would touch the heart of every Nazarene around the world and enlarge his or her missionary vision so that these people too might hear the gospel.





## CHAPTER III

### RELIGION

Man cannot live without a certain form of religion, and the type of religion a man has determines his whole ethical being and conduct. Whatever we may say of the so-called Christian nations of today, one thing cannot be refuted—the spiritual background of a nation is of the utmost importance. Where there is freedom of worship and complete separation of church and state, there is a greater measure of progress and security. Those nations that have lived under spiritual domination of one form or another have an imprint of superstition and ignorance which makes them backward and stagnant.

Any extreme is dangerous. The rigid control exercised by the Catholic church in Peru and Mexico in the past can be seen in the social and economic conditions of their respective populations. True, a great effort is being made today to awaken hearts to a new standard of living compatible with the advantages now offered them by other nations. But, because of the domination of their consciences in the years gone by, they are fifty years behind. On the other hand, Uruguay with only 9 per cent illiteracy is at the present time undergoing a terrific change for the worse. It is becoming increasingly indifferent to the true gospel. Materialism and secularism are paramount in the thinking of its people. We are praying for this country, that it may have a revival of religion that will shake the very foundations of its existing institutions and churches.

In Brazil the Catholic church does not have the absolute control it has exercised in other parts of Spanish America. Mr. T. Lynn Smith, whom we have already

quoted, attributes this to the fact that since 1842 there has been a great shortage of priests in Brazil. He quotes a Brazilian priest when he says that in 1939 "there were only 2,593 parishes served by 2,512 *sacerdotes* of the secular clergy. In addition to the secular clergy there were 13 religious orders for males and 11 for females. The former included among their numbers 2,504 *sacerdotes*, 894 teaching brothers and 832 teachers." These were too few in number to help the nearly 50,000,000 people of that time.

It has also been mentioned that another reason for the tolerant religious attitude is the considerable interest in the acute problems of the modern day. "In any case an important portion of the clergy are urging attention to the problems of the Amazon . . . the lessening of obstacles to immigration and rural welfare programs of various kinds."

Let us now look in another direction. While in Cuba nearly two years ago, I heard a representative of the Brazilian church speak about the evangelical population of Brazil. He stated that one-third of all Protestants in Latin America reside in his country. He also mentioned that as of December, 1953, there were 1,034,683 full-fledged church members. He further stated that the figure would jump to two million if one were to include believers and minors. This is not bad. He recognized, however, that it was not enough and finished his speech with this statement: "Brazil at this date is completely open to the gospel." This was a simple statement, but it caught my attention, for it was made by a Brazilian who himself had had years of experience in the work.

If one were to connect this last paragraph with what has been said at the beginning of this chapter, he would find that, inasmuch as Brazil is a challenging place for entering with the gospel, the true Church of Jesus Christ has been painfully slow in fulfilling her responsibility of the Great Commission in that country. A Presbyterian

friend told us that the Brazilian church is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary this year. It has a membership of 80,000 and the help of 300 ministers. But what is this in comparison with the great need now prevalent? People are hungry for the gospel. Even now one can repeat the words of Henry Martyn, the Anglican missionary, who, after studying the religious condition of Brazil in 1805, said: "Crosses you will find in abundance, but when will they know the doctrine of the Cross?"

People want the kind of gospel that translates itself into good, clean lives. They do not need a set of new creeds or an organization that might present a "new angle" to Christianity. They want to see lives that are saturated with the Spirit, witnessing lives, lives that are ready to offer themselves for God. Some years ago the Pentecostal church arrived in that great country. Since then churches of this faith have been popping up like mushrooms. The lesson is obvious.

We attended two fine services while in Brazil. The first one was in Campinas, sixty miles from the capital of the state of Sao Paulo. Services are held every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. after the regular Brazilian Presbyterian church has finished its worship in Portuguese. This service is conducted in English under a community church program in order to help the missionaries of different denominations who may be studying Portuguese at the school of languages.

The whole service was interesting. Worshipful songs were sung. A lady missionary rendered a solo in a truly spiritual atmosphere. After Bible reading and appropriate announcements, the preacher of that morning spoke about "Christ at the Door." It was a clear, effective, thought-provoking message. He began by saying that it was strange that Christ would say, "I am the door," and that He himself would stand at the door and knock. He spoke of how some people let Jesus enter only a certain

room or rooms of the house and reserve for themselves a small place where they can keep all they are reluctant to give to God. The message ended with an appeal to let Jesus have absolute sway in one's heart.

The message did me a lot of good. But throughout the service I was thinking of General Superintendent Benner's message on the reasons for the organization of our church. He said, if I remember correctly, that ours was a matter of: (1) emphasis on the freedom of the Spirit, (2) emphasis on a program of evangelism, and (3) emphasis on a correlation of what we preach with what we live. I especially thought about that first point. I remember how as a boy I grew up in a Nazarene church in Mexico where no missionary personnel was available. I thought of my own adjustment problems when I arrived in Pasadena, California, to attend school in the midst of a church which, although it carried the same name I had known in Mexico, possessed something of a genius that I had not experienced before. I recalled the Southern California camp meeting in those days and how the freedom of the Spirit could be felt in the services. Then I thought: Someday we will come to Brazil. I know we do not need just another denomination here. Yet both the populous areas as well as the rural sections need something we know we can offer—something in the way of freedom of the Spirit, emphasis on evangelism, and emphasis on the testimony of clean lives.

The second service we attended was in Londrina, in the state of Paraná, approximately three hundred miles southwest of Sao Paulo. It was Tuesday evening and the service was held in the Baptist church. The evangelist was to be a well-known Brazilian from Curitiba, the capital of the state. About one hundred fifty people were present. The message on the life of Jacob and his experience in Bethel was preached earnestly. The music was good and people were attentive. An altar call was made, although only one teen-ager came to the front.

All in all, it had been a good service. I especially was happy to have seen a purely Brazilian church in action.

That night at the hotel my prayer went something like this: "O God, I feel uneasy in my own heart. Here is this great city only thirty years old, with a population of 75,000—a great coffee center, a thriving populace located at almost the farthest western point in the state, near the Paraná River and the Paraguayan border—having a very limited Christian witness. May we as a church be mindful of Thy will. Show us the path we must take. We will follow Thy leading. Bless our Zion during our anniversary celebration. We not only need the money to enter Brazil and West Germany; we need to keep the zeal that will strengthen us. We must have the vision that will facilitate our advance. We must possess Thee if we are to succeed. Tell me what my part is in Thy blueprint for our church. I tell Thee again that I am consecrated to the task of rescuing men and women from their sins in the name of Jesus Christ, my Saviour."

And now, three months after I uttered that prayer, I try to see things more objectively. I confess that the thing that comes to my mind most frequently is not the beauty of the country. That cannot be disputed. It is not the contacts we made nor the experiences I encountered with the Portuguese language; not even the enjoyment of the services I attended. They all add up to the finest of memories. But the thing that pops up in my mind and heart most often is the short trip we made on Monday, October 28, out of Belo Horizonte in the state of Minas Gerais, nearly four hundred miles north of Sao Paulo.

But first let me tell you a little about Belo Horizonte—Brazil's first "planned city." The name translated into English means "beautiful horizon"—a reference to the *Curral del Rei* (King's Court), a mountain range that encircles the high plateau on which the city is located.



Ouro Preto, thirty-five miles distant, used to be the capital of the state of Minas Gerais. This name was given the place because of its immense mineral wealth. It was originally open for settlement by the miners, having soon become the first center of Brazil's inland civilization as well as the base for expansion in the west. The world's greatest deposits of iron ore are said to be those of Itabira. In the eighteenth century Ouro Preto became one of Brazil's most renowned intellectual centers, its nucleus being the "Minas School" of poets. However, more than one hundred years of exploitation exhausted the mines and Ouro Preto ("Black Gold") gradually lapsed into oblivion, being important only as capital of the state.

A booklet published by the Pan-American Union says: "What Taxco is to Mexico, Ouro Preto is to Brazil—a gem of colonial art and architecture, untouched by modern civilization and preserved as a national monument." Unable to keep pace with the growth of Minas Gerais, it finally relinquished its hold, and the capital was transferred to the shining new city of Belo Horizonte in 1897. At the present time it is claimed that the population of this city has soared to nearly 900,000.

We arrived in Belo Horizonte about noon. There we were to contact a missionary from another group who was engaged in special services in that section. We felt that he could be of assistance to us in scouting the area. Later activities proved that we were not mistaken. He and two of his companions, one a Brazilian by birth, provided us with much helpful information. We talked concerning Protestant work in that area of Brazil, the reaction to the gospel by different types of people, standards of living, and the work now being carried on for God in the state. We took some time to get acquainted with the various sections of the city, and we decided that we wanted to see some of the outlying areas, since the idea had been expressed that around

there many places were wide open to the preaching of the gospel.

We drove to a small town about fifteen miles from Belo Horizonte. On our way we saw a large acreage of land and beautiful buildings owned by the Catholic church. They operate a large school for monks. The *Igreja Da Pampulha* (Church of Pampulha), near the Pampulha Lake, built at a high cost, is completely modernistic in style both inside and out. It is surrounded by beautiful flower gardens which are in striking contrast with the general appearance of the country. We also saw an important road under construction, an index of future expansion and progress. Along both sides of the road we could see humble houses and huts, many of them surrounded by an orchard, a coffee plantation, or cornfields.

The town we visited has a population of nearly 10,000, is traditionally Latin-American in make-up, lies close to a nice lake, and has a sedentary appearance. Upon inquiry we found out that there was not a Protestant church in the city. The ever-present Catholic church was there all right, but in such a state of disrepair as to reveal very little use. This attracted my attention. So I asked someone at the country store what the normal attendance was at the church across the street. "Not very many," he said, "except when there is a big *fiesta*, and even then the place is not full." Then, as if in jest, he added: "I guess people don't care much for the church." From the physical standpoint that was obvious. But I am afraid his answer went even further. It meant that people were religiously indifferent; they did not care much for the established church. But then, there is no other religious work in that town. Many still practice their own pagan rites and superstitions.

Then I realized that to a casual visitor in Latin America seeing a Catholic church building in the center of

every city, town, and village would speak of religious unity and corresponding moral conduct.

.. But the longer one stays in a Latin-American country—and that no doubt can be said of Brazil—one becomes convinced that religious homogeneity does not exist. Later I found this quotation from Arthur Ramos, a Brazilian himself, in the useful work entitled *Brazil*, written by T. Lynn Smith: "The most advanced forms of religion, even among the most cultured people, do not exist in a pure state. Besides the official religion, there are subterranean activities, among the backward strata of society, among the poorer classes, or in heterogenous peoples, among the ethnic groups, that are most backward culturally. . . . This fundamental form—incarnations of totemic, animistic, and magical beliefs—survives in spite of the most advanced religious and philosophical conceptions of the superior strata of societies" (*O Negro Brasileiro*, p. 35). Then Mr. Smith adds his own comment: "While the upper classes and the official religion of a society may have freed themselves to a considerable extent of animistic beliefs, and magical practices, such is not the case among the less enlightened masses."<sup>1</sup>

There, it seems to me, lies the open door for the Church of the Nazarene. Regardless of what has or has not been done for the living God in Brazil, we as a church have been given the responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission. Until everyone around the world has heard the message of full salvation, until every tongue and tribe has learned by experience what it means to have the forgiveness of sins and to enjoy precious fellowship with the Spirit—our task is to go to cities, towns, villages, and huts with a clear-cut message. It is our task to open the eyes of the spiritually blind. We must help the lame to walk straight. We should be the instruments in God's hand to start the inner chords of men's hearts singing

<sup>1</sup>Smith, *Brazil*, p. 586.



again the spiritual melodies of heaven. This we must do if we are to stay alive.

Throughout the intervening weeks and months since our visit to Belo Horizonte, this has been uppermost in my mind.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONTACTS

The true Nazarene spirit cannot be static. It advances. It is interested in new avenues of service. It has a desire to open new fields.

The reason for this attitude can be found in our church's interpretation of the Great Commission. "Go ye into all the world," said Jesus, "and preach the gospel to every creature." It can also be found in the universality of this gospel, which Peter explained clearly when he said: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, . . . put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9).

As a matter of fact, only when a Christian is willing to recognize that the Great Commission was meant for him, and that He who gave us this commission has complete power to transform hearts and lives, will he be a channel of blessing to others.

In the Early Church those who were scattered abroad carried the message of full salvation wherever they went. Even though I recognize that persecution did cause the benefits of salvation to reach more rapidly other places outside of Palestine, personally I also believe that the compulsion to preach the gospel by word as well as by practical living would have been so great that the same result could have eventually been obtained. The individual who enjoys the holy presence of God's Spirit cannot but go out and fulfill His ministry.

It is a privilege now for you to meet the Stegemollers. Mr. and Mrs. Stegemoller went to Brazil some time ago. Both are members of the Indianapolis West Side Church of the Nazarene. Mr. Stegemoller was sent to Brazil by

the manufacturing company for which he works. He and his family moved down there to make a living. But they had the true Nazarene spirit in their hearts. They were willing to let their light shine wherever they might be. Even before they left for South America they expressed a desire to help in any way possible to open Nazarene work in their new community.

Within one-half hour after we arrived at the hotel in Sao Paulo we made efforts to contact them. We found out later that they had missed us at the airport. Not knowing the exact time of our arrival, they waited until early in the evening and then decided to go back to their home in Campinas. Upon arriving home they learned that we were in the city. So back they drove again the sixty-mile distance to Sao Paulo. There is a fine two-lane highway between the two cities, and to anyone driving in the States a distance of sixty miles offers no trouble. But traveling in a foreign country involves a little more planning and effort than it would in North America. In addition, they had to leave their two children in care of a baby sitter all night. It was after eleven o'clock at night when we finally met.

Sometimes we speak of the Nazarene trade-mark, that which characterizes our church and the people who belong to our group. It is not an exaggeration by any means to say that this couple had the Nazarene imprint in all of their behavior. We were strangers for only a few minutes. The rest of our stay in Brazil was made more pleasant because of our fellowship with the Stegemollers. This case alone made me proud to belong to a great company of sanctified men and women who have determined to carry on preaching the doctrine of full salvation around the world. During those days in Brazil, I was greatly enriched by having met these fine servants of God.

All day Sunday was spent in their home. They furnished us with valuable information and contacts. We

attended the church where they usually go on Sunday mornings. We scouted the area for a possible site from which to start. Property is less expensive in Campinas than in Sao Paulo. In fact, everywhere we went we looked into the matter of property. Even though we knew that the General Board would make the final decision as to the right place to start, we felt that as much information as possible should be gathered in order to answer the many questions they would present. During those hours of conversation how my heart rejoiced in the prospects that lay before us for preaching the gospel! We could see large sections occupied by needy people. The city has a population of nearly 150,000 and, as far as the physical situation is concerned, someone has said that "it is probably the most pleasant place to live—and no doubt the most healthy. Rainfall is adequate and its accessibility to the city makes it an ideal place." But many times the fact was brought out that around the cities one can find many places where new work could be opened with fine results. My feeling was that there is still plenty of room for evangelism and the organization of churches both in the city areas and in the interior.

We contacted people of many other denominational groups. All were eager to help. A Free Methodist missionary, whom I contacted in Sao Paulo, informed me that their missionaries arrived ten years ago because some of their Japanese members had moved to Brazil years earlier and had asked for help. He added, "In this idea of opening new work one has to go where the need is the greatest." Another one of our contacts expressed it this way: "We begin our new work wherever we have a nucleus of our own people." It appeared from our vantage point that the Stegemollers would be the beginning of a nucleus in Campinas and the surrounding area.

While in Belo Horizonte, in the state of Minas Gerais, we were told that a great need is being felt among

the rank and file of the Brazilian people. They need a gospel that will stir them to action, that will help them testify and will provide them with inner power to win others. Our two contacts there told us how people are eager to hear the gospel that transforms lives. They also told us how the power of daily prayer, both public and private, helps bring about results even among Protestant groups which at the present time seem to accept some of the modernistic religious tendencies of our age.

We found this to be true when we were in Londrina the next day. The friendly driver who took us to a nearby village spoke to us concerning his own need of religion. "In this section," he said, "people have become money-conscious. I do not blame them though; this is one of the strongest coffee centers in the state. But I realize that we need more of the true religion." We had just driven by a church building which stood in the center of town. I wondered what he had in mind when he expressed his desire for a true religion. He promised that he would take time from his regular duties to seek a place where he could receive spiritual help.

While in Londrina we were attracted by the music and bustle nearby. We decided to take a walk around the block. Back of the Catholic church and extending across the street into the local park, we saw a big festival in full swing. Vendors could be seen offering their wares. All sorts of music and voices could be heard: radios, jukeboxes, boisterous singing, loud conversations. More especially we could see places where lottery and something like roulette were played. Many people were drunk. Children could be seen wandering aimlessly to and fro. In the faces of the people could be seen the marks of sin and evil. One could imagine, however, the tremendous need of their hearts. Actually they were spending all they could afford to, because the profits (and these were excessive) were for the repair program of the church. Now I wish that I had asked how long they had

been contributing to that church. While we were in Callao, Peru, several weeks later, a man closely related to the Catholic church told me that their building was erected in less time than most of the other projects. He added: "Sometimes it is convenient to let the project go for years and years. It helps in collecting money."

After all of our contacts were made and we had taken the plane for Uruguay, I tried to re-evaluate my answer to the question I had asked myself earlier concerning our work and the call to Brazil. Why go to Brazil now? My previous answer had been that we have now more adequate resources and contacts, that this provided a challenging outlet to our missionary program, and that it was providential that we should think of Brazil now that communism is doing everything in its power to win South America. All this is true and furnishes a reasonable answer. However, as we left this South American country, my question was changed to "Why haven't we as a church come to Brazil sooner than this?"





## CHAPTER V

### EMBARRASMENTS

Some have suggested that embarrassments are vehicles of knowledge. Perhaps they are. I do know that the more intense the embarrassment, the less liable we are to forget it.

When I was about seven years old, a Swedish missionary from another church came to my home town in Mexico and taught me to sing two songs. One was the Swedish national anthem. The other was one stanza of "The Star-spangled Banner." For months I was like a circus monkey that is asked to play his part before whatever audience can be gathered. I used to sing these songs everywhere and almost on any pretext. I did not know what I was singing, since I learned only the approximate pronunciation. I never felt embarrassed then. But today, even the thought of what I did causes the blood to rush to my face.

Difficulties concerning language have been part of my lot during the last twenty years. I have had so many of them that I do not feel as embarrassed as I used to. As a matter of fact, I even mention some of them publicly. For instance, there is the time when I was asked to go to the basement of a house and bring up a bucket. Somehow I felt that after three weeks in the States I ought to know what the word meant. In fact, I had a faint recollection that I had learned it at one time. I went downstairs to look for something which was completely unknown to me. As I reached for the light, I almost fell over a certain object. I did not stop to investigate it. Besides, it is not a bucket, anyway, I said to myself, and

kept on looking for that something. After three attempts to look for the bucket and the necessary explanations from the lady who had sent me downstairs for it, she decided we both had better go and find out. There was the bucket—the very thing that I nearly stumbled over.

“Bucket,” said the lady, “*b-u-c-k-e-t*, bucket.”

My eyes opened wide and my heart beat faster. All of a sudden I felt too warm, almost hot. The most embarrassing moment of my life until then had caught up with me. *But I learned the word.*

At the hotel in Sao Paulo, Brazil, a long-distance phone call had to be made. I had made a few other calls while Dr. Williamson was in the room. All had turned out satisfactorily. This time it will be the same as before, I said to myself, and began to tell the telephone operator what I wanted. Without advance notice she began talking very fast. I tried to ask her to slow down. She seemed to be repeating the same thing over and over, and the more she talked, the less I understood. I did not want Dr. Williamson to know that I was having trouble. But trouble it was. Finally I remembered that in making a long-distance phone call the operator sometimes asks you to hang up the receiver until she calls later. I asked the lady operator if that was what she wanted. She said yes. But the perspiration on my forehead gave me away. I was embarrassed.

The next day I took the bus from Campinas to Sao Paulo in order to make arrangements for our trip north. I got off at the bus depot. I needed a taxi to reach the airport. Upon entering the first one that came, I began to explain to the driver, in my kind of Portuguese, where I wanted to go. He did not understand me and I could understand him much less. I tried Spanish, but he still did not know what I was saying. Then I turned to English. He gave me a blank look. I knew that he could not help me, so I motioned that I wanted to get out. The

next taxi driver and I understood each other well. Later I learned that people from the interior, who have not had much schooling, speak the language too rapidly and with too many colloquialisms. I now affirm that it was not my ignorance but his use of too many colloquial expressions that threw me off. Whether you will believe me or not is another thing.

We all know that ordering a meal is no problem if we know what we want and have gone to the right place. Since we were in a foreign country, I wanted to taste something typical of that country. Every nation has its culinary experts. They all think that their food is the best in the world, and rightly so.

After our business one night I felt hungry. I looked for a nice restaurant on the main avenue. I found one full of customers, which was an indication that the food would be good. They gave me a menu and, after reading it, I knew more or less what they had to offer except for one item which I did not understand. Thinking that it was a typical dish, I ordered it. Ten minutes later the waiter came back with a hot dog covered generously with mustard and wrapped nicely in a napkin. I had to confess to him that I was just a poor foreigner anxious to taste some typical Brazilian food. He smiled obligingly and served me a fine meal. This time Dr. Williamson was not with me, and since the waiter would not see me any more, I did not feel too bad.

But on the following Wednesday evening I was not so fortunate. The Stegemollers were to dine with us, since they planned to stay in the city to see us off the next day. We were served at the hotel restaurant. Everyone ordered strictly American food. I wanted something different. After five days in Brazil, I should at least have known how to order a typical meal. So I ordered. Twenty minutes later we were all served. My portion was a pork kidney the size of a large cucumber,

cooked very rare. All I ate was my French fries and coffee.

"Did you enjoy the meal?" I was asked later.

"Oh, I was not very hungry," was my reply.

To this day I am trying to convince myself that they believed me. But I have a feeling that they knew the truth right along.

Another trip to Brazil may be out of the question for me for the rest of my life. Nevertheless, while in that country I decided that I would attempt to study Portuguese in order to cope with any future emergency. This way I can satisfy my desire to learn and at the same time acquire some much-needed self-assurance.

## CHAPTER VI

### APPRAISAL

During the last twenty years our church has entered many countries with the message of holiness—Alaska, British Honduras, Bolivia, Cuba, Haiti, Italy, Korea, New Guinea, Nicaragua, Portuguese East Africa, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay, to name just a few. These have been the objects of interest for our Home Missions and Foreign Missions departments. Some wish that we could enter such places as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama, etc. Eventually we will enlarge our borders to many other countries. Our task is clearly defined in the Word of God.

But it is very appropriate that we should enter two great countries in this our anniversary year: West Germany and Brazil. The Department of Home Missions is looking toward Europe; foreign missions will make a new thrust in South America. With one arm extended southward and the other toward the east, our church looks to the time, should Jesus tarry, when it will embrace every country in the world.

This is the time to enter Brazil. As I have tried to evaluate objectively this our new thrust, I cannot but feel that we are doing the right thing. The following are my reasons:

1. *The need is great.* Pascoal Lacroix, in *O Mais Urgente Problema do Brasil*, states that "in our country the general average of true Catholics does not exceed 10 per cent."<sup>1</sup> This would make less than 6 million Catholics in the whole country, which, added to those

<sup>1</sup>As cited by T. Lynn Smith in *Brazil*.

not considered "true Catholics," can total no more than 20 million. At the present time there is an increasing number of "spiritualists." They, together with the Masons and about two million Protestants, would add another 20 million. This leaves about 17 million people who are Catholic in name only, but who do not practice religion and live in ignorance and wickedness. Add those who practice the fetish cults of African origin and the systems of religious beliefs and practices derived from aboriginal sources, and you have a clearer picture of the religious situation.

Says Mr. Smith: "It is undeniable . . . that both the Indian pagé and the African fetisher play significant roles in Brazil's religious activities. In fact, as one passes down the social and color scale from the rather pure white population of high estate to the blacks and red men who rank at the bottom of the social ladder, he passes from a population in which Christian monotheism reigns supreme to one in which the fetish cults from Africa and the magico-religious patterns of aborigines hold almost undisputed sway."<sup>2</sup>

Mohammedanism was brought to Brazil by slaves who had been in previous contact with Arabic culture. In fact, history states that "during the early years of the nineteenth century, these negroes, greatly aided by their knowledge of the Arabic tongue and ability to communicate by writing, organized some of the greatest revolts that Brazil ever knew." The country made an attempt to eliminate them entirely and deported a great number. But many were absorbed by the Bantu groups and are used as "lines" for the calling up of spirits within the Bantu ceremonial system.

The Catholic church does not have as tight a grip on Brazil as in other countries. This is a decided advantage

<sup>2</sup>*Brazil, op. cit.*, p. 599.



for us. However, from Catholic indifference to gospel indifference there may be only one step. We must get there before this step is taken. The preaching of the gospel might be more difficult in the future if the Church does not do her task now.

2. *Large numbers of people are within easy access.* Most of the population inhabits the eastern and southern coastal sections. The north, which is the Amazon section, is less populated and comparatively few people live in the central and western zones. The government hopes to develop the state of Matto Grosso by moving the federal capital there from Rio de Janeiro. This is, however, a costly project. For a long time this proposal was included in the over-all plan of the country, but not until now has there been a decided effort to move the capital. Reasons for doing so are connected mainly with the desire for safety from outside countries. When the capital is moved, it is hoped that the inland population will increase and a new surge of progress will follow. But this lies still in the future.

Large settlements of English and German people are found in the deep south, and, if contacted, they may well produce a self-supporting work and be a source of personnel for our churches. Also, in deciding on a place to organize, the ever-growing coffee sections and oil refineries in the state of Paraná must not be forgotten. Active people—easy to reach and willing to work—live there.

Besides, it is a fact that many Protestant groups have opened work among the Amazonian tribes in the north. Of course there is still room in that region, but I believe that better results may be obtained and more solid work can be done near the populous areas in the south.

3. *Communism is making a tremendous effort to get hold of the people.* Just recently Moscow offered to de-

liver as much oil as needed to Petrobrás, Brazil's oil monopoly, and to provide production and refining equipment. Many other generous offers have been made in the past. How the Brazilians will react to this ever-increasing pressure, no one can tell; but if we are to take the situations in Argentina and Bolivia as a sort of pattern, we might conclude that communism plans to make a big dent in these democratic countries. A mission was sent from Argentina to Moscow recently to find ways and means for trade relations. Bolivia is closely watching present policies regarding zinc and other products in order to make up her mind. Certainly there is plenty that can be said concerning communism and its desire to control the peoples of earth. The active development of an effective Christianity in Brazil might turn the life of the country in another direction.

4. It is obvious that persecution can hinder the progress of the gospel. *Organized persecution of the Protestants does not exist in Brazil.* The groups which have been working there say that they are not hindered by government pressures or fanatical opposition. The Brazilians as a whole do not feel unprotected. They have self-assurance. Even though illiteracy is about 60 per cent, the higher-type people are somewhat evenly distributed. In the same measure that the Texans feel that their state is the best—for certainly it is the largest in the Union—the Brazilians feel that Brazil is the best of all Latin-American countries. They are proud of their resources and of the size of their country. Therefore, they are less apt than small countries to think that their country is being “taken over” by people from North America. They are friendly and receptive to the gospel.

5. *We have fine contacts in the country.* Members and friends of our church now living in Brazil will aid us greatly during our first years there. Obviously we cannot enter every state or even a half dozen points in the



interior right away. By necessity our work must be solid, but it will increase gradually. Here, as in Korea, the Philippine Islands, Alaska, and other places, visitors from our country and friends with a desire to help will make of this one of the finest works our church has around the world.

6. Beyond all of this, however, lies *the ever-increasing inner compulsion to preach the gospel*. Multiplied millions of people around the world clamor for something that can solve the sin problem in their own hearts. It has been said that "no one has a right to hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once." Shall we turn deaf ears to those who beg us for spiritual help? Shall we go on living complacent lives when right in front of us people lie perishing in sin and darkness? The living Church of Jesus Christ cannot but go out and seek "that which was lost" in order to bring them to the feet of the Master, who said: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Jesus' commandment and our inner compulsion must join to stir us to action now.

I realize that entering Brazil with the message of holiness is no small project, but our people have always attempted great things. We have planned for and I believe that we will reach the one million dollar goal set by the General Board for the Easter and Thanksgiving offerings this year. This will be a clear indication that we must go forward under God and for His glory.

This chapter is being written a few days after the 1958 session of the General Board in Kansas City. Rev. and Mrs. Earl Mosteller have been approved for transfer from the Cape Verde Islands to Brazil. They will be our first expeditioners. Rev. and Mrs. Charles Gates of Avon Lake, Ohio, will be in the language school in Campinas preparing themselves for the task. Others will follow later in the year. This way our representatives will be

near the large cities as well as in the interior. It all points to a first-class job under God's direction and adequate supervision by one of the members of the Board of General Superintendents of our church.

It was my privilege to translate into Spanish the anniversary theme song by Dr. Haldor Lillenas. This was done in Argentina, South America. As far as I know, it was in this country that the Spanish version of the song was first sung by a whole congregation. I wish I could describe the enthusiasm of the people as they sang:

*"The sun never sets in the morning."  
The work we must do lies before.  
Pressing forward in His name,  
Full salvation to proclaim—  
And "the sun never sets in the morning!"*

Both the ministers and laymen believed what they were singing. As I write these lines, I have a hopeful feeling that before the year is over the same song will be sung in Portuguese—not only in Portuguese East Africa or in the Cape Verde Islands, but also in Brazil. May they also feel that "there are tasks to be done, there are souls to be won."

Doors close at night to protect their inhabitants. At the first sign of the morning sun they are opened again so that people can go in and out during the day.

Brazil's open door is a clear invitation to our church. The sun is beginning to shine inside its borders. This is the beginning of a new day for our church, and as Dr. Bresee so clearly expressed it, "The sun never sets in the morning."



"In this brief volume the reader will get a glimpse of the vast country of Brazil through the understanding mind of one who has a burden for all the unevangelized world, especially Latin America. May that burden be shared by the entire church as we begin our work in this country of such great need and potential for progress."

*G. H. Williamson*